

Libertarians ask: Will Megan's Law protect politicians — or our children?

Why are sadistic child molesters only serving half their jail terms?

WASHINGTON, DC — Megan's Law will be better at protecting the jobs of politicians than protecting the lives of children, the Libertarian Party charged today.

"When politicians talk about community notification, what they *really* mean is: 'We've just set more child rapists free in your neighborhood,'" said Steve Dasbach, national chairman. "Megan's Law may make politicians feel better, but it won't make our children any safer."

The New Jersey law, upheld by a federal appeals court last week, allows states to notify communities when sex offenders are released. The law is named for Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old girl who was raped and murdered in 1994 by Jesse Timmendequas, who lived across the street.

"The fact is, Megan would be alive today if this predator, who had been convicted twice of sexual attacks on children, had been kept behind bars where he belonged," said Dasbach. **"But instead of protecting her, politicians have virtually guaranteed that many more Megans will be brutalized."**

The reason: Child molesters serve an average of just 37 months in prison, according to the U.S. Department of Justice — which is less than *half* the average sentence for such crimes.

"In other words, child molesters get to spend three to four extra years roaming your neighborhood — instead of serving out their full jail terms," said Dasbach. "Forget Megan's Law: Wouldn't Americans feel safer if criminals were *behind bars*, instead of living next door?"

So why are dangerous child molesters — who have terrifyingly high recidivism rates — being sprung from jail so early? It's part of an ongoing national trend to imprison fewer violent criminals, noted Dasbach.

"In 1980, a full 48.2% of newly sentenced offenders had been convicted of violent crime. By 1992, that number had fallen to 28.5%," he said. "During the same time, the number of people in jail for drug crimes skyrocketed from 6.8% to 30.5%."

"Politicians had a choice: They could either keep child molesters behind bars, or imprison people for smoking marijuana. They chose to release psychopathic criminals who prey on children, and the murder of Megan Kanka is the price we've paid for that policy," he said.

In the long run, Dasbach predicted, Megan's Law will provide the *most* benefit to the people who passed it: Opportunistic politicians. "Maybe we need to replace this law with one requiring politicians to notify us before passing more dangerous, useless laws," he said.

#